Return to Dallas

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By Henry J. Taylor

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DALLAS, April 10 — New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's probe into President Kennedy's assassination since my December-January articles from New Orleans on Lee Harvey Oswald brings me back to Dallas.

In the face of the New Orleans developments I want the views now of the chief Federal and local officials personally in command of the investigating teams that supplied the material here for the Warren Commission report.

The man on whom responsibility fell here is Homocide Bureau Chief J. Will Fritz of the Dallas Police Department. The regional FBI, Secret Service, U.S. postal inspectors, etc., and additional teams sent from Washington all worked thru Capt. Fritz.

"I didn't have trouble with him," Capt. Fritz said of Oswald. "We just talked quietly like we are talking now, until I asked him a question that meant something, a question that would produce evidence. Then, every time, Oswald immediately said he wouldn't talk about it and seemed to anticipate what I was going to ask."

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THE interrogations broke into five sessions during the 45½ hours Oswald was under arrest. He was in this small room for two hours and later five hours after he was brought in at 2 p.m. Friday from the Texas Theater; an hour beginning at 10:25 Saturday morning; two hours that afternoon after he vainly tried several times to reach on the phone in New York lawyer John J. Abt, a frequent defender of alleged communists; two hours Sunday before Oswald left Capt. Fritz's office at 11:15 and was shot downstairs at 11:21.

The regional FBI chief here is veteran investigator J. Gordon Shanklin, famous in the bureau. Says his special agent, James W. Bookhout, whom Shanklin placed at most of Capt. Fritz's interrogations: "Any time you asked a question pertinent to the investigation Oswald refused to discuss it." Oswald responded to the Secret Service local agent in charge, Forrest V. Sorrels, Secret Service Inspector Thomas J. Kelly and U.S. Postal Inspector Harry D. Holmes the same way.

Yet this is the Lee Harvey Oswald that William Manchester has the unmitigated gall in "The Death of a President" to state falsely "we know" went insane at 9:30 the previous night. This is the cool, canny communist that millions have been led to believe was a "crackpot."

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I FIND that none of the investigation participants here is in touch with New Orleans District Attorney Garrison. Not one. Capt. Fritz tells me has not closed his own investigation. Nor, I find, has the FBI. But the men who know the most about the horror here Nov. 22 remain absolutely convinced that Oswald performed alone.

Garrison's contentions take on a totally different projection thru their eyes than our public has any reason to grasp.

They do not know Garrison's case, but they do know Louisiana law, much of which comes uniquely from French Napoleonic roots.

The Louisianan claims a conspiracy. Under Louisiana law Garrison has only to prove that conspiratorial discussion did, in fact, occur, whether anybody did anything about it or not.

Should Garrison be able to take an additional very long step beyond this, of course, and prove that Clay Shaw or any alleged conspirator paid or otherwise abetted Oswald, and can prove Oswald was the assassin, the abettor could be convicted as an accessory to the murder.